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ABSTRACT

The Pittsburgh Middle School Teacher Corps Project (PMSTCP) is a competency-based, field oriented master's program developed and implemented jointly by the Pittsburgh Board of Education and the University of Pittsburgh. The PMSTCP has developed a model which focuses on competencies needed to train teachers to work with urban middle school students using a diagnostic/prescriptive approach to individualized instruction. The program encompasses both the use of modules as instructional vehicles and the design of a comprehensive delivery system which delineates program structure and provides for flexibility within the structure as needed. The delivery system includes the field based, community oriented setting, on-site instruction, a clinical/resource supervisory support system, and a mechanism for continual evaluation. Efforts are being directed to examine closely the relationships between learning theory and classroom practice, between societal sensitivity and individual values, and between the roles of the teacher in the teaching/learning setting and the learning behaviors of students. Formative evaluation of the program is being conducted on a continual basis. The most important question is, What type of teacher training program will make the most difference for learners? (Author/PB)

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PITTSBURGH MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER CORPS PROJECT

Part One

The Pittsburgh Middle School Teacher Corps Project is a competence-based, field oriented master's program. Developed and implemented jointly by the Pittsburgh Board of Education and the University of Pittsburgh, the project is federally funded with the Board acting as prime contractor and the University as sub-contractor for the training program. Given the movement both nationally and locally toward middle schools, the PMSTCP has developed a model which focuses on the competencies needed to train teachers to work with urban middle school students using a diagnostic/prescriptive approach to individualized instruction. The program encompasses both the use of modules as instructional vehicles and the design of a comprehensive delivery system which delineates program structure and provides for flexibility within the structure as needed. The delivery system includes the field based, community oriented setting, on-site instruction, a clinical/resource supervisory support system, and a mechanism for continual evaluation. Highlighted by the cooperation between the Pittsburgh Board of Education and the University, efforts are being directed to examine closely the relationships between learning theory and classroom practice, between societal sensitivity and individual values, and between the roles of the teacher in the teaching/learning setting and the learning behaviors of students. The most important question is: What type of teacher training program will make the most difference for learners?

The PMSTCP has been designed to explore answers to that question and to enable teacher educators to examine the implications of their own decisions and value positions for future teachers.

Part Two

Evolution and Development of the Program

Developed cooperatively by the Pittsburgh Board of Education, and the School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, this program is designed to develop the competencies needed by teachers who work with urban middle school students. Interns have been selected through an intensive interview process, twenty interns are working at two Pittsburgh middle school sites. Two intern supervisors at each site have direct responsibility for supervising intern work. A University Faculty member acts as site coordinator, working at the site two days a week in a resource/facilitator/supervisory capacity with the intern supervisors and as individual resource/instructors for resident staff members who are cooperating in program implementation. Approximately twenty-six teachers at each site are using modules and contracting with individual interns for competence demonstration.

Competencies for interns have been identified and clustered in modules, i.e., Individualized Instruction, Questioning Strategies, Unit Construction. Each module contains a pretest, exit-out clause, and the body of the module which specifies both knowledge and skills needed for competence demonstration. Of special significance is the final stage of the module, the demonstration contract. Here the student is expected to be at a problem solving level, given the module focus, and is to design and implement a teaching/learning situation which will enable him or her to demonstrate competence. In executing the contract, the intern synthesizes module competencies into a plan of action that takes on unique expression in the particular contract academic content area. Of equal importance at this stage is the Teaching Competency Profile, an instrument which specifies planning, teaching, and evaluation behaviors and which is used by the intern, the intern supervisor, and the resident teachers with whom the intern has worked to evaluate contract performance.

A significant aspect of the program is the community component. Here, interns work for hours each week in the community with parents, students and community agencies. Interns, through directed activities, conceptualize the community, study and analyze the community dynamics, sub-cultures, agencies, value the community and plan to interact with the community. Interns will have become aware of the existing political, economic, and social factors which act either to facilitate or limit educational opportunities for students.

The program has three components: school, community, and university. Each area contributes to the development of competencies or competences--the ability of the intern to function at a problem solving level, to bring to bear on a situation the appropriate knowledge and/or skill necessary to identify the relevant cues or problem, to consider alternatives, to select a course of action and to evaluate the results. The program encompasses the processes of individual and group learning. It involves individuals at all levels in the decision-making process and endeavors to be responsive to intern as well as component needs.

Objectives for the Fitchburg Public School Student Intern Program

The following objectives have been identified for the University program:

I. To establish a two year graduate program to prepare teachers for urban middle schools.

II. To establish, implement, and evaluate a model internship which is consistent with the philosophies of higher education and a school district which is committed to prepare pre-service and inservice teachers to meet an educational need. It is so specified that the components can be adapted by other institutions.

III. To develop, implement, and evaluate an individualized teacher education program.

IV. To develop, implement and evaluate a competency-based teacher education program.

V. To develop, implement and evaluate a teacher education program which reduces the dichotomized behavior.

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